

## Message Text

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FM AMCONSUL HONG KONG

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UNCLAS HONG KONG 8979

FOR AGRICULTURE: FAS, G&F DIV; AND ERS.

FROM AGRICULTURAL OFFICER

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: EAGR

SUBJECT: RECORD 1973 EARLY RICE CROP CLAIMED FOR PRC

REF: TOFAS 138

SUMMARY: NCNA CLAIMS RECORD EARLY RICE CROP DESPITE WIDESPREAD ADVERSE NATURAL FACTORS DURING GROWING SEASON. GOOD PERFORMANCE BELIEVED RESULT OF INCREASED YIELDS RATHER THAN INCREASED AREA. PRELIMINARY ASSESSMENT INDICATES POSSIBLE INCREASE OF 1.0 TO 1.5 MILLION TONS OVER 1972. END OF SUMMARY.

1. ON SEPTEMBER 5, NEW CHINA NEWS AGENCY (NCNA) RELEASED NATIONWIDE REVIEW OF CHINA'S EARLY RICE CROP SITUATION. THIS IS FIRST COMPREHENSIVE STATEMENT, ALTHOUGH SCATTERED PROVINCIAL REPORTS BEGAN APPEARING IN MID-AUGUST. NCNA CLAIMS BUMPER EARLY RICE CROP, WITH BOTH UNIT-YIELDS AND PRODUCTION ABOVE 1972, THUS REACHING QUOTE RECORD LEVEL IN CHINA'S HISTORY UNQUOTE. RESULTS OBTAINED AFTER OVERCOMING MANY DIFFICULTIES, INCLUDING LOW TEMPERATURES, EXCESSIVE RAINS AND WATERLOGGING.

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2. MOST EARLY-RICE PRODUCING PROVINCES REPORTEDLY OBTAINED HIGHER UNIT-YIELDS THAN IN 1972. TWO MINOR RICE-PRODUCING PROVINCES, YUNAN AND KWEICHOW, REPORTED A 30-PERCENT PRODUCTION INCREASE, AND SEVEN OF NINE MAJOR EARLY RICE PROVINCES REPORTED INCREASED PRODUCTION: HUNAN, HUPEH, KIANGSU, KWANGSI, CHEKIANG, ANHWEI AND KWANGTUNG. SHANGHAI, ALSO AN IMPORTANT RICE AREA, REPORTED INCREASED PRODUCTION. NCNA'S CLAIM THAT FUKIEN AND SZECHWAN HAD QUOTE GOOD HARVESTS UNQUOTE APPEARS TO IMPLY THAT THEIR HARVESTS WERE SLIGHTLY BELOW 1972. FAILURE FOR THE SECOND CONSECUTIVE YEAR TO MENTION KIANGSI, THE THIRD MOST IMPORTANT EARLY-RICE PRODUCER, IMPLIES DIFFICULTIES IN THAT PROVINCE'S RICE ECONOMY.

3. COMMENT: THIS NCNA REPORT ON EARLY RICE IS TWO WEEKS LATER THAN 1972 REPORT. ON PROBABLE REASON IS DELAYED HARVEST THIS YEAR AS RESULT OF EXCESSIVE RAINS DURING GROWING SEASON. THAT DELAY, IN TURN, BELIEVED TO HAVE RESULTED IN DELAYED TRANSPLANTING OF SECOND RICE CROP IN MANY AREAS, WHICH MAY ADVERSELY AFFECT SIZE OF LATE RICE HARVEST.

4. WHILE 3-4 EARLIER PROVINCIAL REPORTS INDICATED INCREASE IN EARLY RICE AREA OVER 1972, THERE IS GOOD REASON TO SUSPECT THAT TOTAL AREA MAY HAVE DECREASED. WHEREAS THE 1972 EARLY RICE CROP EXCEEDED THE 1971 CROP BECAUSE OF ENLARGED AREA, THE 1973 EARLY RICE CROP EXCEEDED THE 1972 CROP LARGELY BECAUSE OF YIELD INCREASES.

5. BASED ON REVIEW OF SCATTERED PROVINCIAL CLAIMS REPORTED PRIOR TO SEPTEMBER 5 RELEASE, CHINA'S EARLY RICE HARVEST MAY HAVE EXCEEDED 1972 HARVEST BY APPROXIMATELY THREE PERCENT. WITH EARLY RICE HARVEST CURRENTLY BELIEVED TO BE CLOSE TO 40 PERCENT OF TOTAL RICE PRODUCTION, WHICH IN NEIGHBORHOOD OF 100 MILLION METRIC TONS LAST YEAR OR TWO, 1973 EARLY RICE CROP COULD BE 1.0-1.5 MILLION TONS LARGER THAN 1972 EARLY RICE CROP.

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